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A Review of Chapter 8

The success of natural science in the eighteenth and nineteenth century had a large effect on both the intellectual and social life of the then people of Europe such that they started trusting the words of scientists and sought their opinions on matters unrelated to science such as law and forensic evidence. This positive response to science happened as a result of a change in the socio-cultural milieu of the time and this explains why belief in science or application of science to any issue is called positivism.

Social science is an area of study dedicated to the explanations of human behavior, interaction and manifestations, either as an individual in a society or collectively as a group, including the institutions, norms and morals such interactions created. Discipline found in social science include: sociology, economics, political science, archaeology, psychology, amongst others. Though the history of the discipline dates back to early philosophers who wanted to know how the society works such as St. Augustine and the 14th-century historian ibn Khaldun; down to Karl Marx, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Emile Durkheim and a host of others. However, Auguste Comte is regarded as the father of social sciences.

Social sciences seek to employ the method of science in the investigation of social phenomena taking the human person as object of study. The objectives include:

1. Understanding humans in both historical and cultural development context and factor responsible for such development or change
2. Being able to predict human behavior based on the pattern of interaction, belief system, social norms and other factors influencing human behavior, especially in relation to the economic and political activities.
3. Influencing human behavior; grooming it towards a socially desirable conduct and channeling collective efforts towards development.
4. Discovering and manipulating if possible the laws governing most of human behavior and;
5. Advancing beyond armchair philosophy, the knowledge about the characteristic temperature and associated behavior of a person or group, or that exhibited by those engaged in an activity.

However, the philosophy of social science arouse out of the curiosity that the central focus and the propelling motive of social science may be impossible and unachievable due to methodological mismatch.

Problems associated with sciences include:

The Problem of Reason and Cause: to have a better understanding of this problem, we need to understand that one of the essential features of science and scientific explanation is to provide a casual or correlational connection between an event and its cause. What does the principle of cause and effect mean? For anything to be the cause of another, the cause and effect must:

1. Have an invariable or constant relation in the sense that whenever the alleged cause occurs, the effect must also occur;
2. Be spatially contiguous, that is, the two events must occur in approximately the same location or at least be related by a chain of events that are spatially linked;
3. Be temporally related such that the cause precedes the effect must follow continuously from the cause and;
4. Have an asymmetrical relation in that the occurrence of alleged cause must be actual event, which brings about the effect, such that the effect must not be part of the original conditions that are necessary and sufficient for its own occurrence.

The Problem of Human Person as Object of Study in Social Sciences

According to Max Weber, methodology of science becomes inapplicable due to the fact that the object of study in social science is man, a rational being with freewill, desires, emotions, and other sentient features that come into play in his actions or reactions. All these factors undermine the notion of predictability of behavior with which natural science is known to deduce their principle and laws.